

Burnham-on-Sea  
Urban District Council



**Medical Officer's  
Annual Report**



**1948**



# ANNUAL REPORT

## OF THE

# MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

### FOR YEAR 1948

To the Chairman and Members of the Burnham-on-Sea Urban District Council.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in presenting to you my fifth Annual Report and the thirty fourth in the series of Medical Officers Reports of the Area.

The Health of our Urban District has been good and the Public Health Services have been efficiently maintained.

The year under review was marked by the coming into force, on July 5th, 1948, of the National Health Service Act of 1946.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Your obedient Servant,

GEOFFREY B. EGERTON,  
Medical Officer of Health.

#### STATISTICS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE AREA.

Area = 2,246 acres.

Population:—

1931 Census	...	...	...	...	7,705
Registrar General's Estimate for 1948					9,153

Rateable Value = £69,203.

Sum represented by a penny rate = £272 19s. 0d.

INDUSTRIES. The chief industries in the Area are: Brick and Tile Works, Timber Yard, Bacon Factory, Perambulator Canopy and Perambulator Rug Factory, Laundry, Creamery, Returned Stores Depot, and our latest Factory, where they make Imitation Jewellery, Small Castings, Stamps and where in addition Electro-Plating is done.

#### STATISTICAL SUMMARY 1948.

Live Births				Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	...	...	...	86	72	158.
Illegitimate	...	...	...	3	3	6

164

Still Births				Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	...	...	...	0	3	3
Illegitimate	...	...	...	0	0	0

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Birth Rate:— 18.2 per 1,000.	Male	Female	Total
Deaths:— ... ..	53	55	108

Death Rate:— 11.7 per 1,000.

Infantile Mortality. (Deaths of Infants under one year of age.)

				Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	...	...	...	5	1	6
Illegitimate	...	...	...	0	0	0

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## VITAL STATISTICS.

**REGISTERED BIRTHS.** After allowing for inward and outward transfers, the Registrar General credited the Urban District with 164 Live Births for 1948:- 89 males and 75 females; of these 6 were illegitimate (3 males and 3 females).

The registered number of Still Births was 3,—all females; there were no illegitimate Still Births.

The Birth Rate for 1948 was 18.2 per 1000 of the population; this is lower than that for the previous year (19.5), but slightly higher than that for the country as a whole (17.9).

**DEATHS.** 108 were registered as having occurred in the Urban District during the year; of these 53 were males and 55 were females. The number of deaths in the four quarters of the year were:— First Quarter 39, Second Quarter 25, Third Quarter 20, and Fourth Quarter 24.

There were 6 deaths of infants under one year of age, 5 males and 1 female, all were legitimate infants.

The Death Rate for 1948 was 11.7 per 1000 of the population; this is lower than the previous year (13.8), but higher than that for the country as a whole (10.8).

The following Table shows the causes of death:—

All Causes	Male 53	Female 55
Tuberculosis of Respiratory System ...	—	1
Other forms of Tuberculosis ...	—	—
Cancer of Buccal Cavity, Aesophagus and Uterus (F) ...	1	—
Cancer of Stomach and Duodenum ...	2	2
Cancer of Breast ...	—	1
Cancer of all other sites ...	7	11
Diabetes ...	—	1
Inter-Cranial Vascular Lesions ...	6	11
Heart Disease ...	14	18
Other Diseases of the Circulatory System ...	1	1
Ulcer of the Stomach or Duodenum ...	1	—
Appendicitis ...	—	—
Other diseases of the Digestive System ...	—	—
Bronchitis ...	2	—
Pneumonia ...	2	1
Other diseases of the Respiratory System ...	1	—
Nephritis ...	3	4
Premature Birth ...	—	—
Influenza ...	—	—
Congenital Malformation, Birth Injuries, Infantile diseases ...	5	—
Diarrhoea (under 2 years) ...	—	—
Acute Infectious Encephelitis ...	1	—
Road Traffic Accidents ...	—	2
Suicide ...	—	—
Other Violent Causes ...	2	—
All other causes ...	5	2

Heart Disease, which claimed 14 males and 18 females, was the principal cause of Death.

# INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

Disease		Cases admitted		
		Total cases Notified.	to Isolation Hospital.	Total Deaths.
Tuberculosis — Respiratory	...	14	—	1
Non-Respiratory	...	2	—	—
Scarlet Fever	...	7	3	—
Diphtheria	...	1	1	—
Measles	...	18	—	—
Whooping Cough	...	102	1	—
Puerperal Pyrexia	...	1	1	—
Dysentery	...	1	1	—
Acute Pneumonia	...	14	3	—
Acute Poliomyelitis	...	11	1	—
Erysipelas	...	3	—	—

Food Poisoning Outbreaks:— None were reported during the year.

## DIPHTHERIA IMMUNISATION.

The number of children immunised in the Area of this Authority was:— School Children 46, Pre-school Children 119, making a total of 165; while 154 children were given a Secondary or Reinforcing injection. There was one case of Naval Diphtheria notified during the year; this was in an adult male aged 38.

## SECTION 47 OF THE NATIONAL ASSISTANCE ACT, 1948.

I have to report that action was taken by the Council under this section; I believe that you were the first Authority in the Country to do so.

In August 1948, a Lady was reported to us by the Area Officer of the National Assistance Board as in need of Care and Attention and that she refused financial help and hospital treatment.

I visited her and confirmed this.

Consequently a Court Order was obtained on August 30th, 1948, sanctioning the removal of this case to The Lodge, Wellington, Somerset—an Institution under the control of the Somerset County Council—for a period of 3 months. This order was extended for a further period of 3 months in November 1948, and again in February 1949. On April 4th, 1949, notice was received of this woman's admission to Tone Vale Hospital, Taunton.

## GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE AREA.

### I. Public Health Officers of the Authority.

Medical Officer of Health—Dr. G. B. Egerton, M.C., M.B., B.S.

Surveyor—J. M. M. Huxtable, M.I.Mun.E., M.R.S.I., A.I.W.E.

Sanitary Inspector—W. B. Graham, M.R.S.I., M.S.I.A.

### II. (a) Laboratory Facilities—The Public Health Laboratory Service, Taunton.

(b) Ambulance Facilities—The St. John Ambulance Brigade, stationed at Highbridge and staffed by voluntary workers of the St. John Ambulance Brigade and under the control of the Somerset County Council.

(c) Nursing—Two District Nurses in both Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge, who on July 5th, 1948, came under the direct control of the Somerset County Council.



- (d) Clinics—The Infant and Child Welfare Centres in both Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge.

## HOUSING.

There were 455 applicants for Council Houses at the end of 1948.

Eight houses were erected during the year; all were Permanent Houses and erected by Private Enterprise. Ten Houses were in course of erection; also, all permanent, and by Private Enterprise.

A new Estate Lay-out is proposed for 230 houses by the Council Architect, but no site works were commenced during the year (1948). The rehousing of families living in overcrowded and insanitary conditions is, in my opinion, one of the biggest contributions this Council can make towards improvements of the Health of the local population. Many families still share houses, many young couples have no homes of their own, and many marriages are delayed, because no houses are available.

The conditions under which aged and infirm people reside is another phase of human life with which Public Health Officers have to deal, and it is extremely difficult at times, when relatives do not, or cannot, undertake the responsibility of looking after them.

## SANITARY WORK.

### (1) WATER SUPPLY.

Samples of the water supply after chlorination are consistently reported as free from Coliform Bacilli by the Public Health Laboratory Service each month. Samples of the raw water have been taken quarterly, and, with one exception, satisfied the test.

The water supply of this area has been satisfactory in quality and quantity.

All houses within the boundaries of the Urban District have a main piped water supply.

The 3 inch main in Westfield Road, Burnham was extended by 486 feet. A new bore-hole is projected for the Winscombe Source in order to replace an old bore-hole, which has been in use for a number of years.

### (2) MILK SUPPLY.

(a) Total number of registered Dairy Farms	...	21
(b) Number of Retailers	...	17
(c) Number of Producer Retailers included in (b)	...	6
(d) Number of Licensed Pasteurising Plants.	...	—
(e) Number of Heat Treatment Plants not included in (d)	...	1
(f) Number of Heat Treatment Plants authorised by Ministry of Food		1

(These last 2 plants are one and the same).

The Heat Treatment Plant is at the West of England Creamery, Highbridge, and the installation of Pasteurising Apparatus (High Temperature Short Time Process) has been commenced during the autumn of this year—1948.

### (3) ICE-CREAM.

The number of Premises registered for:—

(a) Manufacture	...	4
(b)	...	22

Improvements have been carried out by manufacturers, both of premises and equipment, and the regular use of detergents for cleansing has been adopted.

### (4) SLAUGHTER HOUSES.

The number of licensed Slaughter Houses in this District is 7.

Six of the Slaughter Houses have been licensed under the Food and Drugs Act of 1938,—the other one was licensed under the Public Health Acts. None are now in use as such,—all rationed meat being dealt with at Weston-super-Mare abattoir.

### (5) KNACKERS YARDS.

The number registered in this district—1.

### (6) SEWAGE DISPOSAL.

There were no extensions of Sewers, new works, or improvements during the year.

### (7) RIVER POLLUTION.

There were no cases dealt with during the year.

In April of the year under review—1948—I inspected the bed of the old River Brue, in company with the Sanitary Inspector, and made the following observations.

That I would be hesitant to define the existing conditions as a Public Health Nuisance or prejudicial to Health.

The existing conditions certainly interfere with comfort and the enjoyment of life,—the river bed is unpleasant and an eye-sore and during a long spell of dry weather, coinciding with low tides, the conditions would be favourable to the breeding of insects. At the monthly series of high tides and especially as in March and September, water pours into the cellars of the houses.

I stated in my report that the ideal solution would be to have the old river bed filled in, and a back road constructed.

Here, I wish to acknowledge the help I have received throughout the year from Mr. Huxtable, the Surveyor and Mr. Graham, the Sanitary Inspector.







